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## PROLOGUE.

"Who is she?"  
 "How did she get there?"  
 These are the questions the Fool asked of the caretaker of the venerable castle of that high handed old robber baron, the first of the Rothhoefens.  
 And these are the questions the interested reader starts to ask and keeps on asking while Author McCutcheon develops one of the most mysterious, humorous and sprightly stories that ever came from his pen.  
 "Who is she?"  
 "How did she get there?"  
 Read on and you will find much entertainment as well as the answer to these pertinent queries.

## CHAPTER I.

## I Make No Effort to Defend Myself.

I AM quite sure it was my Uncle Elias who said that I was a fool. If memory serves me well he revealed himself of that conviction in the presence of my mother—whose brother he was—at a time when I was least competent to acknowledge his wisdom and most arrogant in asserting my own. I was a freshman in college, a fact of which perhaps— which should serve as an excuse for both of us. I possessed another uncle, incidentally, and while I am now convinced that he must have felt as Uncle Elias did about it, he was one of those who suffer in silence.

I assume, therefore, that it was Uncle Elias who only convinced me, in assumption justified to some extent by putting two and two together, after the poor old gentleman was laid away for his long sleep. He had been very emphatic in his belief that a fool and his money are soon parted. Up to the time of his death I had been in no way qualified to dispute this ancient theory. In theory, no doubt, I was the kind of fool he referred to, but in practice I was quite an untied novice. It is very hard for even a fool to part with something he hasn't got. Not until Uncle Elias died and left me all of his money was I able to demonstrate that dead men and fools part with it.

In any event Uncle Elias did not leave me his money until my freshmen days were far behind me, wherein lies the solace that he may have outgrown an opinion while I was going through the same process. At twenty-three I confessed that all freshmen were inefficient and immediately afterward took my degree and went out into the world to convince it that seniors are by no means infallible.

My uncle's original estimate of me—as a freshman, of course—was uttered when I at the age of eighteen picked out my walk in life, so to speak. After considering everything I decided to be a literary man—a novelist or a play-wright. I hadn't much of a choice between the two, or perhaps a journalist. Being a journalist, of course, was preliminary, a sort of makeshift. At any rate I was going to be a writer. My Uncle Elias, a hard headed customer, who had read Scott as a boy and the Wall Street News as a man without being misled by either, was scornful. He said that I would outgrow it; there was some consolation in that. He even admitted that when he was seventeen he wanted to be an actor. There you are! said he.

I argued that novelists make a great deal of money and playwrights, too, for that matter. He said in reply that an ordinarily efficient washerwoman could make more money than the average novelist and she always had a stocking without a hole to keep it in, which was more to the point.



Now that I come to think of it, it was Uncle Elias who oracularly pre-judged me and not Uncle John, who was by way of being a sort of literary chap himself and therefore inimately unqualified to guide me in my course whatsoever, especially as he had all he could do to keep his own wolf at bay without encouraging mine and who besides teaching good English loved it wisely and too well.

My mother felt in her heart that I ought to be a doctor or a preacher, but she wasn't insular. She was positive I could succeed as a writer if I set my mind to it. She was also sure that I could be president of the United States or perhaps even a bishop. We were Episcopallians.

When I was twenty-seven my first short story appeared in a magazine of considerable weight, due to its advertising pages, but my Uncle Elias didn't read it until I had convinced him that the honorarium amounted to \$500. Even then I was obliged to promise him a glimpse of the clock when I got it.

In course of time my first novel appeared. It was a love story. Uncle Elias read the first five chapters and then skipped over to the last page. Then he began it all over again and sat up nearly all night to finish it. The next day he called it "trash," but invited me to have luncheon with him at the Metropolitan club and rather nobly introduced me to a few old cronies of his.

A month later he died. He left me a fortune, which was all the more staggering in view of the circumstance that had seen me named for my Uncle John and not for him.

It was not long afterward that I made a perfect fool of myself by falling in love. It turned out very badly. I can't imagine what got into me to want to commit bigamy after I had already proclaimed myself to be irrevocably wedded to my profession. Nevertheless I deliberately coveted the experience and would have attained to it no doubt had it not been for the young woman in the case. She would have none of me, but, with considerable independence of spirit and, I must say, noteworthy ammen, elected to wed a splendid looking young fellow who clerked in a jeweler's shop in Fifth Avenue. They had been engaged for several years. It seems, and my swollen fortune failed to disturb her sense of duty. Perhaps you will be interested enough in a girl who could refuse to share a fortune of something like \$300,000 (not counting me, of course) to let me tell you briefly who and what she was. She was my typist—that is to say, she did piecework for me as I happened to provide sustenance for her active fingers to work upon when she wasn't typing law briefs in the regular sort of grind. Not only was she an able typist, but she was an exceedingly wholesome, handsome and worthy young woman.

Somehow I was able to attribute the fiasco to an inborn sense of shyness that had always made me faint hearted, diffident and unaggressive. No doubt if I had gone about it roughshod and fiery I could have played hob with the excellent jeweler's peace of mind, to say the least.

Still, some men, no matter how shy and recalcitrant they may be—or reluctant, for that matter—are doomed to have love affairs thrust upon them, as you will perceive if you follow the course of this narrative to the bitter end.

In order that you may know me when you see me struggling through these pages, as one might struggle through a morass on a dark night, I shall take the liberty of describing myself in the best light possible under the circumstances.

I am a tallish sort of person, moderately homely and not quite thirty-five. I am strong, but not athletic. Whatever physical development I possess was acquired through the ancient and honorable game of golf and in swimming. In both of these sports I am quite proficient. My nose is rather long and inquisitive, and my chin is considered to be singularly firm for one who has no ambition to become a lawyer. My throat is abundant and quite black. So there you are. Not quite what you would call a lady killer or even a lady's man, I fancy you'll say.

You will be surprised to learn, however, that secretly I am of a rather romantic, imaginative turn of mind. Since earliest childhood I have consorted with princesses and ladies of high degree—mentally, of course—and my bosom companions have been knights of valor and longevity.

At thirty-five I am still unattached and, so far as I can tell, unloved. For the past year I have done little or no work. My books are few and far between. My best work is done when the madding crowd is far from me.

A month ago, in Vienna, I felt the

plot breaking out on me, very much as the measles do, at a most inopportune time for everybody concerned, and my secretary, more wide awake than you'd imagine by looking at him, urged me to cuddle the muse while she was willing.

It was especially annoying coming, as it did, just as I was about to set off for a fortnight's motorist trip up the Danube with Elsa Hazzard and her stout husband, the doctor.

The fourth day of our delectable excursion brought us to an ancient town whose name you would recall if I were fool enough to mention it and where we were to put up for the night. On the crest of a stupendous crag overlooking the river, almost opposite the town, which isn't far from Krems, stood the venerable but unvenerated castle of that high handed old robber baron, the first of the Rothhoefens.

We picked up a little of its history while in the town and the next morning crossed over to visit the place. Its antiquity was considerably enhanced by the presence of a caretaker who would never see eighty again and whose wife was even older. Their two sons lived with them in the capacity of loafers and, as things go in these rapid times of ours, appeared to be even older and more seere than their parents.

It is a winding and tortuous road that leads up to the portals of this huge old pile. Halfway on the hill we paused to rest, and I quite clearly remember growling that if the confounded thing belonged to me I'd build a rickshaw or install an elevator without delay.

The next day instead of continuing our delightful trip down the river we three were scurrying to Saalsburg, urged by a sudden and stupendous whim on my part and filled with a new interest in life.

I had made up my mind to buy the castle!

At the end of three days I was the sole owner and proprietor of a feudal stronghold on the Danube, and the joyous Austrian who had owned it was a little farther on his way to the dogs, a journey he had been negotiat-



The Venerable Castle of That High Handed Old Robber Baron, the First of the Rothhoefens.

ing with great ardor ever since coming into possession of an estate once valued at several millions.

To make the story short, the Hazzards and I returned to Schloss Rothhoefen in some haste, primarily for the purpose of inspecting it from due-gown to battlement. An interesting concession on the part of the late owner (the gentleman hurrying to catch up with the dogs that had got a lot of a start on him) may here be mentioned. He included all of the contents of the castle for the price paid, and the deed, or whatever you call it, specifically set forth that I, John Belamy Smart, was the sole and undivided owner of everything the castle held.

Our second and more critical survey of the lower floors of the castle revealed rather urgent necessities for extensive repairs and refurbishing, but I was not dismayed. With a blithesome disregard for expenses I dispatched Rudolph, the elder of the two sons, to Linz with instructions to procure artisans who could be depended upon to undo the ravages of time to a certain extent and who might even suggest a remedy for leaks.

My friends, abhorring rheumatism and like complaints, refused to sleep over night in the drafty, almost painless, structure. They came over to see me on the ensuing day and begged me to return to Vienna with them. But, full of the project in hand, I would not be moved. With the house full of carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, locksmiths, tinmiths, plumbers, plasterers, glaziers, joiners, scrubwomen and chimney sweeps, I felt that I couldn't go away and leave it without a controlling influence.

Just as they were leaving my secretary and my valet put in an appearance, having been summoned from Vienna the day before. I confess I was glad to see them. The thought of spending a second night in that limitless bedchamber, with all manner of night birds trying to get in at the windows, was rather disturbing, and I welcomed my retainers with open arms.

My first night had been spent in a

## SIMPLE WAY TO END DANDRUFF

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There is one sure way that has never failed to remove dandruff at once, and that is to dissolve it, then you destroy it entirely. To do this, just get about four ounces of plain, common liquid arvon from any drug store (this is all you will need), apply it at night when retiring, use enough to moisten the scalp and rub it in gently with the finger tips.

By morning, must if not all, of your dandruff will be gone, and three or four more applications will completely dissolve and entirely destroy every single grain and trace of it, no matter how much dandruff you may have.

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If you value your hair, you should get rid of dandruff at once, for nothing destroys the hair so quickly. It not only starves the hair and makes it fall out, but it makes it stringy, straggly, dull, dry, brittle and lifeless, and everybody notices it.

huge old bad, carefully prepared for occupancy by Herr Schmeck's frau. I knew there was a ceiling, for I had seen its beams during the daylight hours, but to see my soul I couldn't imagine anything so far away as it seemed to be after the candles had been taken away by the caretaker's wife, who had tucked me away in the bed with ample propriety and thoroughness combined.

Twice during that interminable night I thought I heard a baby crying. So it is not unreasonable to suppose that I was more than glad to see Poopen-dyke, my secretary, clambering up the path with his typewriter in one hand and his green baize bag in the other, followed close behind by Britton, my valet, and the Gargantuan brothers bearing trunks, bags, boxes and my golf clubs.

"When?" said Poopen-dyke, dropping

wearily upon my doorstep.  
 My secretary is a youngish man with thin, stooping shoulders and a habit of perpetually rubbing his knees together when he walks.

"It is something of a climb, isn't it?" said I beamingly.

"In the name of heaven, Mr. Smart, what could have induced you to—?" He got no farther than this, and to my certain knowledge this unfinished reproof was the nearest he ever came to openly convicting me of stupidity.

"Make yourself at home, old fellow," said I in some haste. I felt sorry for him. "We are going to be very cozy here."

"Cozy?" murmured he, blinking.

"I haven't explored those upper regions," I explained nervously, divining his thoughts. "We shall do it together in a day or two."

"It looks as though it might fall down if we jostled it carelessly," he remarked, having recovered his breath.

"I am expecting masons at any minute," said I, contemplating the unstable stone crest of the northeast turret with some uneasiness. My face brightened suddenly. "That particular section of the castle is uninhabitable, I am told. It really doesn't matter if it collapses. Ah, Britton! Here you are, I see, good morning."

Britton, a very exacting servant, looked me over critically.

"Your coat and trousers need pressing, sir," said he. "And where am I to get the hot water for shaving, sir?"

"Fran Schmeck will supply anything you need, Britton," said I, happy on being able to give the information.

"It is not I as needs it, sir," said he, frowning at his smoothly shaved chin.

"Come in and have a look about the place," said I, with a magnificent sweep of my arm to counteract the feeling of utter insignificance I was experiencing at the moment.

(To be continued)

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